

COMBINING BASAL AND INDIVIDUALIZED READING IN A  
WORKABLE PROGRAM FOR PRIMARY GRADES

by

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## THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The chief objective of reading instruction in the modern elementary school is to equip pupils with the means to progress in social and academic skills and provide them with the kinds of experiences that enrich personality.

Reading instruction means more than the ability to sound out, recognize, and pronounce words. As early as 1925, the National Committee on Reading listed the chief aims in teaching pupils to read. These were as follows:

1. To arouse keen interest in learning to read
2. To cultivate a thoughtful reading attitude
3. To promote a clear grasp of the meaning of what is read
4. To stimulate keen interest in personal reading.<sup>1</sup>

Controversy over the ways to teach reading continues to concern educators. For two decades new research studies were undertaken for the gifted and retarded readers as well as emphasis placed on remedial programs.<sup>2</sup> The rapidly growing fields of knowledge concerning child growth, development, and learning behavior caused teachers to question

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<sup>1</sup>Guy M. Whipple (ed.), Report of the National Committee on Reading, Twenty-Fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, pp. 9-12.

<sup>2</sup>May Lazar, "Individualized Reading: A Dynamic Approach," The Reading Teacher, p. 75.



if all children could be taught to read by the same method of instruction. Teachers experimented with new instructional materials and methods which provided the best possible means of meeting the individual needs of all children. As a result, reading instruction has been revised, broadened, and extended.

The traditional basal reading program provides the framework through which the reading abilities, skills, and techniques are introduced and taught.<sup>1</sup> The basal program consists of carefully controlled instruction and assures training in the various reading skills.

Important to the success of the basal reading program is that much reading must be done in materials other than the basal reader. A good program makes provision for a wide range of individual differences in pupil reading ability, interests, and needs by drawing from a variety of sources.

It was the purpose of this report to present a review of the literature to determine those methods and procedures used in individualized reading, the incorporation of which could be of value when supplementing instruction from the basal readers. A combined program would be designed to offer rich and worthwhile reading experiences

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<sup>1</sup>Guy L. Bond and Eva Bond Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read, p. 24.

in that various reading methods and materials would be used. This variety of materials and procedures drawn from other than the basal reader would serve to enrich the lives of children as the desire to explore and enjoy the printed page is cultivated whenever the need or occasion arises.

### The Problem

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to: (1) state present day practices of reading instruction; (2) report current attempts to combine features of basal and individualized programs; (3) review literature for an approach to such a program; and (4) state and evaluate the content of a combined program appropriate for use in primary grades.

Purposes and need for the study. In the primary grades, skillful teaching of reading is of great importance. The primary teacher wants pupils to be able to use reading effectively as a learning tool and to enjoy and appreciate reading.

Pupils differ in their abilities and capacities for learning. Harris writes that the importance of reading becomes obvious if one considers what happens in our culture to those who fail to learn to read well.<sup>1</sup> Poor

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 2.



readers repeat grades, encounter frustration and failure throughout much of their school years.

Pupils differ in their abilities and capacities for learning. Children in any grade are at widely different stages of development. Russell suggests that in the modern program there is no one best method of teaching reading. Despite a great number of studies and descriptions of procedures filling many volumes, no one has yet discovered an infallible method by which every child learns to read well.<sup>1</sup>

Children differ in every possible ability related to reading, therefore, good planning will include a rich variety of instruction which views the individual as an interacting, unified whole. According to Russell, teaching methods are based on the assumption that reading can be one of the most significant forms of learning for individual and social development.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the years, research studies have shown that class or group instruction could not wholly succeed in reaching the individual. It was obvious that there was a need for more attention to be given to the development of each individual at his own rate if educators are to succeed in reaching and ministering to the needs of every

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<sup>1</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

child.<sup>1</sup>

Basal and individualized approaches to reading instruction are not incompatible.<sup>2</sup> Certainly there are strong features and values of both methods which the teacher should consider. The important issue concerning the primary teacher is that of appropriating the method of instruction which will prove most effective and profitable for each child.

#### Definitions of Terms Used

Reading. Reading is the interpretation of printed symbols and the reconstruction of facts behind visual symbols.<sup>3</sup>

Individualized reading program. The prime characteristics of an individualized reading program are:

1. Self-selection of materials by pupils for their own instruction.
2. Individual conferences between each pupil and teacher.

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<sup>1</sup>May Lazar, "Individualized Reading: A Dynamic Approach," The Reading Teacher, 11:80, December, 1957.

<sup>2</sup>Walter B. Barbe, Personalized Reading Instruction, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, p. 733.



3. Groups organized for other than reasons of ability or proficiency in reading.<sup>1</sup>

Free reading or self-selection. Children are permitted to select reading material which they want to read and are given time during class to read.

Partial individualization. Partial individualization is to proceed in slow stages in the direction of individualization where group sessions are held but the basis for grouping is some factor other than ability.

Basal reading program. Basal reading is reading aimed at the systematic development of reading ability by means of a series of books or other materials especially suitable for each successive stage of reading development.<sup>2</sup>

Basal reading materials. A series of books especially adapted to systematic development of reading abilities may be considered basal reading materials.<sup>3</sup> A typical modern basal series for primary grades will include pre-primers, primer, and readers for the respective grades.

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<sup>1</sup>Jeanette Veatch, Individualizing Your Reading Program, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup>Dictionary of Education, p. 329.

<sup>3</sup>Virgil E. Herrick, "Basal Instructional Materials in Reading," Report of the National Committee on Reading, Sixtieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, p. 170.

Pupil workbooks accompany the books.

Co-basal. Co-basal refers to a departure from the traditional practice of using only one set of basal materials for the group. Co-basal is to use more than one text or basal material during the year.

Grouping. This study makes reference to two types of grouping. Homogeneous grouping denotes a classification of pupils, such as grade groups or ability groups which is based on the ability to achieve and learn. One arrangement is to place the poor readers in one class, the average readers in other classes, and the superior ones in another.

A second type of grouping is based on sociological factors whereby the groups are held together by common interests and objectives rather than only ability to read.

Combined program. The procedure for organizing and dividing instructional time between basal and independent reading is a combined program. The strongest features of individualized reading are combined with the proven practices in basal work.

Supplementary books. Supplementary books are reading materials designed to re-enforce, enrich, or to maintain ability which has been developed during the reading of

basal materials.<sup>1</sup>

Trade books. Trade books are commonly thought of as library books. They are usually read for enjoyment. The trade book is not considered a text book.

#### METHOD OF RESEARCH

The method of research followed for this report was a survey of library materials. The study was to review literature in the field of reading dealing with previous as well as present day practices and trends. The literature reviewed was selected from resources of Kansas State University Library, Manhattan, Kansas.

#### Limits of the Study

This study was limited to the grades of primary level (first, second, and third).

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reading is the act of reconstructing from the printed page the writer's ideas, feelings, moods, and sensory impressions.<sup>2</sup> Reading taste and ability are always tethered

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<sup>1</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, p. 743.

<sup>2</sup>A. Sterl Artley, "What Is Reading?" A Report on Elementary Education, p. 3, March, 1965.



to past experiences. Reading, therefore, must be seen as more than saying the word and more than seeing the sentence and paragraphs. Good reading is the way a person brings his whole life to bear on the new ideas which he finds on the printed page. It is reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines.<sup>1</sup>

In this current stage of our history, people see themselves in greater need of enlightenment than at any other era. Individuals fulfill many life needs through reading.

Gray writes,

Six uses of reading in the American life are: (1) an aid to meeting everyday needs; (2) a tool of citizenship; (3) a pursuit for leisure time; (4) a tool of vocation; (5) a source of spiritual refreshment; and (6) an aid to enrichment of experience--including personal development and vicarious experiencing.<sup>2</sup>

Parents and lay citizens are expressing greater concern and a growing interest in children's reading. By analyzing and re-examining the function of reading in today's living, schools have directed greater effort to revitalize and re-evaluate current instructional practices and techniques. Only then can the most desirable reading

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<sup>1</sup>May Lazar, "Individualized Reading," Education, 78:281, January, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>Lillian Gray, Teaching Children to Read, p. 4.

habits, attitudes, and skills be developed and provided for every pupil.

Present-day reading goals provide for the pupil's enjoyment, contribute to his development of literary appreciation, and help to form a personal commitment to the fundamental values of society. The history of reading instruction shows that objectives have changed from time to time.

#### Development of Present-day Methods

When the colonies were established in America between 1607 and 1733, religion dominated and directed all areas of colonial life including instruction in the schools. Education everywhere in the colonies was designed chiefly for boys and the chief method of learning was memorization. The Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed together with long passages of the Bible were memorized by all pupils. The techniques used were those of learning the alphabet, spelling syllables and words, and reading orally. Pupils were inducted into the reading process through the alphabetical method.<sup>1</sup>

The Hornbook was the first piece of instructional material which was made popular during the colonizing

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<sup>1</sup>Nilá Banton Smith, American Reading Instruction, p. 34.



period. It's purpose was for catechizing in church and for giving pupils their first reading instruction.

The New England Primer was the first reading textbook specifically designed for American colonies. This famous beginning textbook taught reading, spelling, religion, and morals.<sup>1</sup>

A general change occurred in educational goals during the mid-Eighteenth Century. American statesmen became convinced that pupils should be educated to love their country and to become good citizens. Not only did the nationalistic and moralistic aim exert an influence over the content of the new readers, but to a large extent it also shaped the methods used in teaching reading during the period.<sup>2</sup>

Noah Webster produced the first set of readers written by an American author. His book, written in three parts, was published under the title of Grammatical Institute. In 1790 the parts were printed separately. Section I, known as The American Spelling Book, proved to be the most popular of the three readers. Section II contained a treatise on grammar and Section III contained "An American

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<sup>1</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 34.



Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking."<sup>1</sup> The latter was designed for advanced readers and was used extensively in academies. It contained patriotic speeches, moralistic selections, and geographical information about the United States.

Lyman Cobb produced a number of reading texts including a First Book, A Spelling Book, Juvenile Readers, Numbers I, II, and III and the North American Reader. The last was the most popular and dealt with historical material designed to instill patriotism. This text also included subject matter chosen for its moral or character-building qualities.<sup>2</sup> Much emphasis was placed upon precise elocutionary delivery.

After 1840, in addition to acquiring knowledge, improving the intellectual powers, and strengthening moral and religious sentiments, expressive oral reading and elocutionary delivery continued to be major aims in reading instruction.

By stressing the advantages of Prussian teaching methods as compared to American methods, Horace Mann led the movement to improve the quality of teaching methods. As a result of his endorsement of the improved practices

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<sup>1</sup>Nila Banton Smith, American Reading Instruction, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

and materials of German schools, American techniques were greatly influenced during this period.

Between 1840 and 1860, a number of reading series were published with content and methods resembling German readers. It was also during this period that the graded school evolved, largely as a result of the reports about German schools in which pupils were grouped according to age and ability.<sup>1</sup>

During the period 1836 and 1844, McGuffey produced the first successful graded reading materials which were a great improvement over the Webster speller-reader.<sup>2</sup> The reading content emphasized a range of informational subjects in science, art, history, literature, and politics.

Educational leaders voiced a vigorous protest against the A B C method of teaching in 1840. The new word method of teaching reading was widely accepted after the Bumstead and Webb readers were published the same year. Bumstead's book My Little Primer, was the first reader to be based specifically on the word method.<sup>3</sup> However, teachers did not abandon the alphabet method because the majority of textbooks continued to advocate the method. During this

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<sup>1</sup>Nila Banton Smith, American Reading Instruction, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Lillian Gray, Teaching Children to Read, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 87.



period there was a strong tendency to teach the sounds of letters. This procedure of teaching has been termed the alphabet-phonetic method.

By 1880, American interest turned to cultural pursuits in music, art, and literature. This concern for cultural development resulted in an emphasis upon the use of reading as a cultural asset in adult life.<sup>1</sup> All goals, methods, and materials were directed toward developing greater interest in literature. It was at this time that the reading of materials other than those included in the basic reader came to be a popular practice. Materials used for supplementary reading were usually sets of additional readers.

From 1880 to 1901, an elaborate phonetic system was in practice. The word method which was also used, expanded into the sentence or story method with phonics receiving a subordinate emphasis.<sup>2</sup>

Outstanding changes in readers during the period, 1910-1929, saw a disappearance of elocutionary rules and of moralistic and informational selections. For the first time rhymes and folk tales were used in beginning readers. The emphasis was almost exclusively upon silent rather than

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<sup>1</sup>Nila Banton Smith, American Reading Instruction, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 141.



oral reading. Ability grouping in reading was recommended for the first time. Attention was directed toward meanings in all phases of education. The first educational research in reading was of great interest during this period. Many scientific investigators concerned themselves with the standardization and application of reading tests. The term remedial reading appeared during the middle of this period.<sup>1</sup> Gates and Gray pioneered in developing diagnostic and remedial techniques during these years.<sup>2</sup> It was believed that vocabulary should be rigidly controlled in order to correct reading difficulties. As a result basal readers were more carefully controlled and graded often at the sacrifice of interest and appeal of stories.

With the 1950's and 1960's teachers became more concerned with adapting methods of instruction to individual needs. More emphasis was placed on meaning and the development of a joy for reading.

#### Objectives of Present-day Reading Instruction

Listing the major criteria of a sound reading program, the Yearbook Committee of the National Society for the Study of Education has shown the interrelations between

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<sup>1</sup>Nila Banton Smith, American Reading Instruction, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the reading program and the school program as a whole and emphasized that reading must fit harmoniously into the total plan of a good program of education. The committee summarized a good program as one that:

1. Is consciously directed toward specific valid ends which have been agreed upon by the entire school staff;
2. Coordinates reading activities with other aids to child development;
3. Recognizes that the child's development in reading is closely associated with his development in other language arts;
4. At any given level, is part of a well-worked-out larger reading program extending through all elementary and secondary school grades;
5. Provides varied instruction and flexible requirements as a means of making adequate adjustments to the widely different reading needs of pupils;
6. Affords, at each level of advancement, adequate guidance of reading in all the various aspects of a broad program of instruction: basic instruction in reading, reading in the content fields, literature, and recreational or free reading;
7. Makes special provisions for supplying the reading needs of cases of extreme reading disability, in other words, the small proportion of pupils whose needs cannot be satisfied through a strong developmental program;
8. Provides for frequent evaluation of the outcomes of a program and for such revisions as will strengthen the weaknesses discovered.<sup>1</sup>

Harris strongly maintained that a sound reading program must have balance among the three main types of

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 11.



reading.

1. Developmental reading activities are those in which the main purpose of the teacher is to bring about an improvement in reading skills--activities in which learning to read is the main goal.
2. Functional reading includes all types of reading in which the primary aim is to obtain information; in other words, reading to learn.
3. Recreational reading consists of those reading activities which have enjoyment, entertainment, and appreciation as major purposes.<sup>1</sup>

### Stages in Reading Instruction

For more than thirty years the reading program has been considered to have five main stages or periods, as stated by the National Committee on Reading. These are as follows: (1) development of reading readiness; (2) beginning reading; (3) period of rapid skills development; (4) period of wide reading; and (5) refinement of reading.<sup>2</sup>

The primary reading program deals only with the specific objectives of the reading readiness stage, the stages of beginning reading, and the period of rapid development of reading skills.

Development of reading readiness. The concept of readiness has influenced many present day school practices.

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 14, 15.



The concept of readiness suggests that there is an optimum time for any particular learning to take place and that attempts at instruction before this stage is reached are usually unsuccessful. Harris states that reading readiness may be defined as the general level of development maturity which makes it possible for a child to learn to read.<sup>1</sup>

Reading readiness is a composite characteristic involving many different factors. In fact, Russell states that the modern concept of readiness is that it is based on a combination of physical, mental, social, and psychological factors.<sup>2</sup> General and specific maturation are vital, but first graders must also be provided experiences which contribute to growth of reading readiness.

The teacher should provide stimulating environmental experiences which enable children to develop skills in following directions, able to sense sequence, and able to complete a task. Opportunities are supplied which permit expression through art, music and manipulation of materials. The teacher provides opportunities for listening, conversation, and participation as children's books, poetry, and singing verses are included in the readiness program. While

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Harris, Effective Teaching of Reading, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, p. 168.

children are enjoying these varied activities, they are readying themselves for the initial stage of learning to read for themselves.<sup>1</sup> In one corner of the room an attractive library should be arranged with a variety of books that any child would be permitted to use during his free time.

In his book Foundations of Reading Instruction, Betts has outlined some guideposts for a readiness program:

1. To stimulate a desire for an interest in reading.
2. To broaden interests.
3. To develop independent work habits.
4. To develop an awareness of pupil responsibility to the group.
5. To promote social adequacy.
6. To develop courteous responses in social situations.
7. To develop loyalty.<sup>2</sup>

The initial stage in learning to read. Most methods textbooks and published reading programs for children agree that the initial period in learning to read is continuous with both the readiness period and the following stage of

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<sup>1</sup>Helen Huus, "Developing Reading Readiness," Instructor, pp. 153-155.

<sup>2</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, pp. 153-155.

rapid development. The initial reading stage builds systematically on what has gone before in the readiness stage. There is no break between the different stages in primary grades.

Children start with meaningful reading of whole words, sentences, and stories as closely geared to their own experiences and interests as possible. Instruction emphasizes relationships between symbols and ideas and the things they represent. This is accomplished by using experience charts, pictures, name tags, and labels on objects about the room.

Chall believes the teacher should provide numerous opportunities for children to re-experience words, phrases, and sentences in different ways such as charts, chalkboard, bulletin boards, and short letters.<sup>1</sup> Considerable time is devoted to building a sight vocabulary. The child is encouraged to identify new words by word analysis such as picture and meaning clues and structural analysis. Phonetic instruction starts slowly in grade one and gains momentum in grades two and three.

The objectives of the initial stage of reading instruction will vary with different children. During the

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<sup>1</sup>Jeanne Chall, "Innovations in Beginning Reading," Instructor, 74:5, March, 1965.



initial stage, the teacher will observe each child for evidence of these accomplishments:

1. The ability to read one-line and two-line sentences with understanding and good oral expression.
2. Ready participation in the reading activities of the group, both as leader and as follower.
3. Increased ability to use picture clues, special features of words, context clues, and phonetic and structural components in word recognition.
4. The development of the ability to read, with ease and satisfaction, the pre-primers, primer, and first reader of the basic reading series.
5. Enjoyment and ease in reading the pre-primers and primers of other series.
6. The ability to read without undue vocalization and without finger pointing or marker.
7. Increasing ability to make adjustments in reading method and rate for such purposes as recalling details, comprehending the main idea, and following an orderly sequence.
8. The development of skills in noting similarities and differences in known words.
9. The desire to read on many occasions when the class program permits freely chosen activities.<sup>1</sup>

By the time the child has shown satisfactory progress in the nine areas listed, he is expected to move gradually from this period to the third stage of developing reading skills.

Rapid development of reading skills. Coming after

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<sup>1</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, pp. 207-208.

the readiness and beginning reading activities of the first grade, the rapid development stage provides an opportunity for continued progress in all important basic reading skills. Developmental reading lessons form the major part of the second and third grade instructional reading program. This stage serves to broaden the aims of the previous period and prepares the child to become a relatively independent reader.

According to Harris, the child in the second and third grades should be able to discover for himself the pronunciation and meaning of many new words, should read orally with fluency and good expression. He should read silently with good comprehension at a rate faster than his oral reading.<sup>1</sup> These achievements would indicate that the child is able to read for pleasure and information. These children have now acquired attitudes, habits, and skills in reading and are able to begin activities which they will continue, with greater emphasis, in the intermediate grades.

Russell lists types of activities which often make up the reading program of a typical second or third grade class:

1. Reading the basic reader with guidance by the teacher, some emphasis upon vocabulary development, group discussion and evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Harris, Effective Teaching of Reading, p. 69.



2. Independent reading of supplementary readers and other books, with occasional guidance by the teacher and direct application to social studies and other class activities.

3. Guided reading of texts and materials in content fields, with the amount of guidance varying according to the difficulty of the reading task.

4. Work-type periods emphasizing skills and involving workbooks, reading games, teacher-prepared materials, and other activities related to specific needs of the group.

5. Creative activities growing out of reading to extend enjoyment or to reinforce the larger ideas of a selection or unit through dramatization, drawing a picture, playing a game, or expressing ideas in rhymes.

6. Free reading, often outside of class, of books at home or from the library which are related to the interests and purposes of the child.<sup>1</sup>

### Basal Reading Instruction

A modern basal reading program is concerned with the systematic and sequential development of all the skills, abilities, and understandings necessary for interpreting written symbols. The basal reading method is characterized by one word, comprehensive.<sup>2</sup> It deals with continuity of growth in all aspects of the reading act including word perception, comprehension, critical and emotional reaction, and the application and use of reading for recreational and

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<sup>1</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>A. Sterl Artley, "Basal Reading Series," Current Approaches to Reading, p. 3.



practical purposes.

The purpose of the modern basal reading program is to help youngsters develop the basic reading skills necessary to enable them to enlarge their vocabulary as well as to enrich their understanding by wide reading in a great variety of other material. Basal materials provide for systematic instruction which includes three objectives:

1. Scope concerns the range of skills that the maturing reader needs to acquire and the content types and themes with which he needs to become acquainted.
2. Sequence which deals with the order given to the teaching of the various elements with which the program is concerned, so that each developmental stage grows out of those preceding and at the same time serves as a foundation for the ones following.
3. Organization brings into proper relation learners, skills, teaching methods, and instructional materials so as to ensure a program having unity and coherence.<sup>1</sup>

Distinctions of basal reading. A generation ago, a typical series of basal readers had a primer and first reader for the first grade. From the second grade through the remainder of the elementary grades only one reader was provided.

Within recent years, basal reading materials have improved in content, format, and mechanics of writing. Today's books are printed with colorful, attractive

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

illustrations and covers. The illustrations are well drawn and the type is designed for children. The trend has been toward a wider variety of materials along with an increased amount of material in a basic series.

A typical modern series of readers may include (1) a reading-readiness book; (2) two or three pre-primers; (3) a primer and first reader; (4) two second readers; (5) two third readers; (6) teacher's manuals to accompany each; (7) pupil's workbooks to accompany each book; (8) supplementary or enrichment books related to the basic books; (9) supplementary materials such as word cards, charts, and tests of related content.<sup>1</sup>

A modern basic reading series is constructed so as to provide,

1. Continuity of growth in reading skills, habits, and attitudes
2. A wide variety of reading activities
3. A complete organization of reading experiences
4. A worth-while content of ideas.<sup>2</sup>

A plan for the use of basal readers that can be found in different manuals usually follows five main steps. These are summarized by Harris:

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<sup>1</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 151.



1. Preparation involves motivation and arousal of interest, introduction and explanation of new concepts, ideas, and meanings. This step also includes the oral and visual presentation of new words to be met in the new selection.

2. Guidance in the first silent or survey reading to stimulate interest, develop understanding of the whole and to develop the habit of reading for a purpose.

3. Re-reading for specific purpose.

4. Building essential habits and skills which encourage and develop word-recognition abilities, increase comprehension of important ideas, give practice in oral, silent, or audience reading, and to help the child with word analysis and phonics.

5. Enrichment activities may include drawing or painting something in the story, dramatization of the story, listening to records, or individual supplementary reading.<sup>1</sup>

Present day use of basal reading. Basal reading systems are used in approximately 99 per cent of school districts although with some variation.<sup>2</sup> Many systems use one series for "basal" work exclusively in grades one and two; others use two series co-basally; and many use more than two in grades four and above. Gates found that the use of one or two sets of basal reading books and materials, and a teaching procedure embodying the main features

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<sup>1</sup>Albert L. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, pp. 74, 75.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Gates, "Improvements in Reading Possible in the Near Future," The Reading Teacher, 12:85, December, 1958.



outlined in basal manuals is the prevailing form of reading instruction in schools today.<sup>1</sup>

Harris reported that in most American elementary schools, the current practice was to choose a set of basal readers for the primary grades and to follow closely the teaching methods recommended by the authors.<sup>2</sup>

In a study of materials, Staiger found that 69 per cent of the schools used basal readers.<sup>3</sup> About half of the first grade classes stayed quite closely to materials of a single basal series and general children's books served as the basic sources of supplementary reading.

Gans believed the two reasons which underlie the decision of schools to accept a basal reader series plan of instruction were: (1) such materials and suggestions to teachers are often the result of much research by specialists, and (2) materials in basic reading series today are adapted to theory which takes into account maturing reading skills, habits, and attitudes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Gates, "Improvements in Reading Possible in the Near Future," The Reading Teacher, 12:84, December, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Ralph C. Staiger, "How are Basal Readers Used?" Elementary English, 35:46, January, 1958.

<sup>4</sup>Roma Gans, Common Sense in Teaching Reading, p. 96.

In order to provide for individual differences, various plans for grouping have developed to meet the needs of all children within a single classroom. By far the most common practice for carrying on basic instruction in reading is the use of the three group organization. According to Gray, a class is usually divided into three groups on the basis of test scores or teacher observation: the fast-moving, the average-moving, and the slow-moving.<sup>1</sup> A few pupils in the class may not fit into any group and must be helped individually. The most common practice followed by the primary teacher is to divide the time equally among the three groups, spending at least one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon for the reading period. Pupils read to themselves while the teacher works directly with another group. Separate provision is made to include recreational follow-up and creative activities in the program. Grouping for recreational and functional reading can be in heterogeneous groups to create special interest groups, to teach a specific skill, to work on a project, or a special need. Spache maintains:

There is nothing unsound in the practice of grouping children for instruction. Grouping is economical of the teacher's planning and time; it fosters a group spirit among pupils; enables the teacher to work more intimately with a part of the class; and thus helps to

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<sup>1</sup>Lillian Gray, Teaching Children to Read, p. 179.



meet pupil instructional needs.<sup>1</sup>

Grouping must be flexible in accord with the varied and changing needs of the individual children.

Evaluation of basal reading. As soon as a child has the need to communicate, it is important to provide him with systematic learning experiences. A basal reading program is a vital part of a total reading program.<sup>2</sup>

If basal materials are to be an effective part of a total reading program, the teacher must make adaptations in the use of the materials in keeping with the learning rates of the pupils, their background of experience, and their levels of skill mastery. Spache maintained the greatest criticism of basal materials was directed against the manner in which the readers were used rather than against the basal approach itself.<sup>3</sup> Critics also direct their remarks to the rigid vocabulary control, meaningless repetitions, uninteresting content, and its failure to provide an adequate foundation for the reading tasks of the content field.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George D. Spache, Reading in the Elementary School, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Kathleen B. Hester, Teaching Every Child to Read, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup>George D. Spache, Reading in the Elementary School, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



Another point of sharp debate is the emphasis on mechanics and word recognition more often than comprehension.

A basal series should be considered as only part of a well-rounded reading program. The teacher must be able to supplement the basal series with a wide variety of materials on various levels of readability to meet the personal interests and needs of the learners.

Russell believes there is a danger that basal readers may become too prominent a part of the reading program. Careful planning in the use of basal books can prevent these dangers:

1. The children of anyone class cannot all profit by the same book of a basal series.
2. A basic series of readers cannot capitalize upon the community environment of a particular school or the interesting news events which occur each week.
3. A basic series of readers should not be used to make reading something apart from the rest of the school program.
4. A basic series of readers may not provide all the reading situations needed by some children.<sup>1</sup>

Materials for a rich, well-rounded reading program should include:

1. Several sets of basal readers in numbers appropriate for the groups using them, ranging in difficulty from readers appropriate for lowest group to difficult readers intended for the grade.

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<sup>1</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, p. 151-152.

2. Workbooks which accompany the readers.
3. Reading games and puzzles.
4. A classroom library of at least fifty books, covering a wide range of difficulty and interest appeal, and changed several times during the year.
5. Reference works. In primary-grade rooms, picture dictionaries should be available.
6. Special teacher-devised materials.
7. Children's magazines and picture magazines.
8. Workbooks not correlated with specific readers. These would be helpful in providing additional practice material for particular reading skills.
9. Related pictures, filmstrips, slides, recordings, and movies to help provide ideational background.<sup>1</sup>

Grouping pupils within a classroom is an economical means of providing for varying rates of learning. Children should be grouped to meet their needs rather than in terms of the number of years they have attended school.<sup>2</sup> Groff cautions that grouping of pupils in three reading groups may not allow children to develop their individual abilities to the fullest extent.<sup>3</sup> The key to the successful administration of a grouping plan is flexibility. The

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, p. 391.

<sup>3</sup>Patrick Groff, "Survey of Basal Reading Practices," The Reading Teacher, 15:235, January, 1962.



pupil must be moved from one group to another as his achievement level and needs vary. Flexibility of grouping promotes personality development by challenging the pupil with appropriate learning situations and by avoiding frustration by tasks being too easy or too difficult.<sup>1</sup> Factors such as emotional, social, physical, intelligence, and certain instructional aspects must be considered when grouping pupils with a classroom.

#### Individualized Reading Instruction

Since 1950, educators have expressed a dissatisfaction with the results of most elementary reading instruction. As many as 15 per cent of American school children failed to learn to read successfully or did little reading on their own. Surveys indicated that a large number of young people held reading in relatively low esteem and had developed no permanent interest in reading as a leisure-time activity. Only about 17 to 25 per cent of the adult population read one book per year.<sup>2</sup>

Some believed that the rigid basal-reading procedure had been a potent factor in regimentation which had caused the neglect of the needs and interests of pupils. The

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<sup>1</sup>Betts, loc. cit., p. 392.

<sup>2</sup>Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 1.



misuse of basal reading materials had contributed substantially to current concern about pupil failures and about remedial instruction.<sup>1</sup>

A growing knowledge of learning theory, child growth and development from such fields as psychology, child study, and sociology led educational researchers to develop new techniques and teaching processes which took into consideration individual differences. Curriculum directors aided teachers in efforts to study and solve problems of subject content, organization, materials, and methods that would make it more nearly possible for each child to make progress at his own individual rate while learning to read. Individualized reading was one of the new considerations during this period.

Interest in individualized reading instruction was at its height in the late fifties and early sixties.<sup>2</sup> Advocates of individualized reading believed it to be a satisfactory means of providing for individual differences. It adapts methods and materials to the wide range of individual differences which exist in any elementary school class. It is based on the psychological rather than the

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<sup>1</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, p. 551.

<sup>2</sup>Nila Banton Smith, American Reading Instruction, p. 376.

logical concept of learning.<sup>1</sup> Each child's reading program is determined by an evaluation of his abilities, interests, and needs.

In studying the developments of the past as related to the topic of individualized instruction, Smith writes that even in our early "Dame School" in America, each child was taught individually and progressed at his own rate.<sup>2</sup> A small group of children gathered in the Dame's kitchen, and each one would "recite" to her from his own place in the primer or Bible as she busied herself with her household duties.

Surveys of reading achievement were made after the development of standardized tests between 1912 and 1920. The test results revealed a wide range of individual differences. During the period between 1920 and 1930 educators determined to break up traditional group organization entirely and implement "individual progression".<sup>3</sup>

A number of attempts were made for adjusting instruction to individual differences. The Winnetka plan was most widely used in American schools. The child completed

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<sup>1</sup>Gudelia A. Fox and Raymond B. Fox, "The Individualized Reading Controversy," National Elementary Principal, 44:46, September, 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, Ibid., p. 377.



assignments prepared in steps of increasing difficulty, but he was also free to proceed from one step to another as fast as he chose and was able to do so.<sup>1</sup>

Gray summarized the major forces leading to a resurgence of interest in the individualization in reading instruction at the elementary-school level.

Children differ so widely in interests, capacity to learn, and motives that it is impossible to provide adequate stimulation and guidance through the use of the same materials and group instruction. If the child is to develop individuality, creativity, and ability to clearly and interpret deeply, he must not be hampered by group regimentation. Instead, he should learn to read in an environment which stimulates motives for reading, which permits free choice of materials to be read at his own rate, and receive help as needed, or at scheduled times.<sup>2</sup>

Distinctions of individualized reading. The individualized method of reading instruction is an attempt to provide for individual differences while recognizing individual interests and purposes as prime factors in the learning process. The approach was concerned with the overall development of the child's reading skills and interests. Olson's study of child development implied that the concepts of seeking, self-selection, and pacing were consistent

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<sup>1</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>William S. Gray, "Role of Group and Individualized Teaching in a Sound Reading Program," The Reading Teacher, 11:99-104, December, 1957.



with a child's maturity and his needs. He believed that each child seeks and selects from his immediate environment those things which he is ready to learn. When this theory was applied to the reading program, Olson maintained that the child selected books which satisfied a particular interest and need. From the wide range of reading materials provided by the teacher, he is able to read at his own pace and report in his own way.<sup>1</sup>

Individualized reading is designed to allow the pupil to develop his unique direction and pace rather than to fit him into a prescribed mode of development supposed typical or normal for his age group. It allows him to progress more rapidly because he is not hindered by group instructional techniques. The program permits the child to strive for self-improvement and avoid possible personal frustrations because his efforts will not be compared directly with those of others.

This does not imply that grouping is never used. Groups are formed when there is an apparent need but are only temporary and for a single, specific purpose. This arrangement gives the child a better sense of his own worth and self-understanding. He is a participating member of

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<sup>1</sup>Willard C. Olson, "Seeking, Self-Selection, and Pacing in the Use of Books for Children," The Packet, Spring, 1952, p. 3.

the group and can rely on his own self-management.<sup>1</sup>

Individualized reading discards the idea of systematic development of reading ability by means of a series of books especially suitable for each successive stage of reading development. It makes provision for reading activities which develop the needed reading skills in functional settings. The method capitalizes upon opportunities for the development of skills in other areas of the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> It combines the best elements of recreational reading and skill teaching. There is more self-initiated reading and extensive use of the library when the child selects books which appeal to him.

Another prime characteristic of the individualized reading is that the individual conferences permit teachers to work almost entirely with individuals. Pupils can enjoy the personal attention they receive in the teacher-pupil conferences. The reading conference is a time of reading guidance, instruction, a remedial period for some, and may also be an excellent opportunity for the teacher to counsel the child regarding a particular personal problem or reading difficulty.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Witty, "Reading Instruction--A Forward Look," Elementary English, 38:159, March, 1961.

<sup>2</sup>Roland West, Individualized Reading Instruction, p. 37.



Certain criteria that are essential in carrying out an individualized program are summarized by Lazar:

1. A wide variety of adequate reading materials appealing to interests ranging over several grade levels will include trade books, basal readers, and magazines drawn from a number of reading levels.
2. Preparing the children for the changes in reading procedure. The children must understand the idea and the method of book arrangement and selection. They must understand when and how to ask for help.
3. Studying the children's interests and attitudes toward reading and helping them select materials if necessary.
4. Finding the children's strengths and weaknesses, their special needs, and their approximate reading levels.
5. Developing necessary routines and procedures regarding conference between each child and the teacher, the number of conferences to be determined by need, and a system of record keeping.
6. Encouraging independence in the children. Pupils will be permitted to explore materials provided and to make their own selections, reading at their own pace.<sup>1</sup>

Present use of individualized reading. Among teachers who think of reading as a highly individual process, an ever-increasing number with creative imagination are developing plans for an individualized reading program. On the surface, individualized reading appears uncomplicated. Groff agrees with the experts in individualized reading, that it is not something to be taken lightly or

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<sup>1</sup>May Lazar, "Individualized Reading: A Dynamic Approach," The Reading Teacher, 11:80, December, 1957.



gone into frivolously.<sup>1</sup> He recommends that it is far better to begin deliberately and gradually. Careful study and preparation before proceeding can help to assure a more profitable reading experience.

Several variations exist among the different individualized reading programs in use today. Some teachers believe there may not be any one "best time" or grade level at which such an instructional program may be started. Veatch contends that any grade level, including first grade, can be a beginning point.<sup>2</sup> For beginning readers in the first grade, and for non-readers at any grade level, reading readiness activities are essential. One teacher, after she felt the pupils were ready for pre-primers or primers, spread the different books out on a table and invited each child to choose any one that he thought he might like to read.<sup>3</sup>

Some authorities indicate that difficulties do exist when individualizing instruction for beginners. Betts states:

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<sup>1</sup>Patrick Groff, "Helping Teachers Begin Individualized Reading," National Elementary Principal, 43:47, February, 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Jeanette Veatch, "Children's Interests and Individual Reading," The Reading Teacher, 10:160, February, 1957.

<sup>3</sup>Lessie Carton and Robert H. Moore, "Individualized Reading," NEA Journal, 53:11, November, 1964.

The most difficult part of the entire curriculum to individualize is beginning reading. The children come to school with no study habits and with none of the tools for learning that can be relied upon in later grades. We rely upon the pupils' skills in reading to make self-instruction possible in grades above the first.<sup>1</sup>

Some teachers move into an individualized program from a situation in which they have 3, 5, 6, or 7 groups.<sup>2</sup> Others individualize instruction from the start. How each one proceeds depends upon (1) the teacher's ability to organize and work with children, (2) the size and previous experience of the group, (3) the teacher's knowledge of books of different degrees of difficulty and interest appeal, and (4) the availability of such books.

Dolch observed that in some classrooms individualized reading was begun gradually at first. The teacher began by using part of the class. If the group method was followed, the better readers would begin individualized reading first. After the plan was explained, pupils selected books of their own choice and understood that the teacher was there to help with difficult words or puzzling ideas when help was needed. In this way a small group started, either sitting before the teacher and stepping up to her side for help, or they read at reading tables, going to the teacher

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<sup>1</sup>Emmett Albert Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Helen K. Mackintosh and Mary Mahar, "Teaching Reading the Individualized Way," School Life, 40:5, May, 1958.



or raising their hands for assistance.<sup>1</sup>

Dolch explained a second method in which the teacher started the program by using only part of the time regularly scheduled for group reading one or two days a week. The teacher gave some direction to the class as a whole and then shifted into group sessions for emphasis on particular skills, such as sounding attack, use of content, or discovery of meanings. Gradually a full-fledged individualized reading program was in operation.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the teaching was done during the teacher-pupil conferences which were held several times a week. The pupil usually read orally to the teacher a portion he had selected from the book he was reading. It was during the conference that the teacher observed the child's reading errors, interest, comprehension, and behavior. Plans were made for the next conference. At the end of the conference, the teacher made a brief record of each individual period. The child also kept simple daily records and reports of his reading progress.

Several times a week, as a group activity, the group shared a part of his book or something he had learned with other children, either the whole room or part of it. The

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<sup>1</sup>E. W. Dolch, "Individualized Reading vs. Group Reading," Elementary English, 39:14-15, January, 1962.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



sharing activities took various forms. Bierbaum listed a variety of methods for sharing books with the group.<sup>1</sup>

1. Select a particularly interesting passage for oral reading.
2. Exhibit an original book jacket.
3. Prepare a poster or an illustration for a book.
4. Be a "salesman" and "sell" the book.
5. Conduct a question and answer period.
6. Conduct a "to-tell-the-truth" panel.
7. If several students have read the same book, they may dramatize parts of it.
8. Make a movie using simple mechanical devices.
9. A puppet show to illustrate the story.
10. A pantomime cleverly acted out.

The teacher saw that children had access to materials they needed and wanted to read. The teacher helped pupils to develop the skills needed to read the materials they selected. Almost any kind of reading materials such as library books, magazines, textbooks, and tradebooks was useful. The essential criteria was that books chosen by children had no more than three unknown words on a page.

Teaching reading by the individualized method

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret L. Bierbaum, "The Individualized Approach to Enrichment Reading," Grade Teacher, 81:88, November, 1963.

requires plentiful resources of children's books. Some schools used five copies of six different supplementary reading books. In many schools, children were encouraged to purchase inexpensive paper bound books which they could exchange with one another. School libraries and book-mobiles were excellent sources for a wide variety of suitable materials. The teacher also used books from the public library or carefully screened books brought from home.<sup>1</sup>

Evaluation of individualized reading. The reading method which received considerable attention in 1950 to 1960 was known as individualized instruction. It was popular also in the twenties and was subject-matter oriented at that time. The more recent individualized plan was child-psychology oriented. It originated around the Olson theory of seeking, self-selection, and pacing.

The method provided for individual reading needs and interests. Each child's progress in reading activities was judged according to his personal capabilities rather than a comparison with other children. Children were reported to enjoy reading more fully because they were released from pressure, frustration, boredom, tension, and from situations that might contribute to the development of

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<sup>1</sup>Lessie Carlton and Robert Moore, "Individualized Reading," NEA Journal, 53:12, November, 1964.

undesirable attitudes toward reading.

The literature states that there are various practices in existence among teachers who attempt to begin individualized reading. Periodical articles show that in most cases, after the child had had a readiness program of activities and recognized a small number of sight words necessary to begin reading pre-primers and simple trade books, he was given the opportunity to select books.

The teachers role was a combined counselor-librarian-reading instructor. The teacher provided a variety of reading materials and instructed pupils in skill development. The pupil met with the teacher during individual conferences and with small groups formed for a specific need. It was necessary that the teacher know and understand the needs of children and be capable of using the most appropriate material for skill development.

Research studies evaluating the results of individualized reading are still quite limited and in the form of unpublished theses, dissertations, or mimeographed reports of experiments carried on in certain school systems. Educators have been unable to formulate a definitive judgment about the method. While teachers using the approach are increasingly reporting highly significant gains, especially in changes in pupil attitude, it is undeniable that more well-grounded research is needed.



Under proper conditions and with the use of appropriate procedures teachers believe there is little doubt that individualized reading can be successful. A summary of some strengths of the method as listed by the teachers who participated in Sartain's study are as follows:

1. Individual conferences provide a valuable personal relationship with pupils.
2. Children are motivated to read more intensively.
3. There is a keen interest in sharing.
4. There is a strong motivation for individual improvement.
5. Top readers are especially responsive.<sup>1</sup>

Among criticism made of individualized reading, Groff states these to be the most common:

1. Procedures are too disorganized, irregular, and time consuming for the average teacher.
2. Reading skills are neglected and faulty word recognition habits are formed.
3. There is not enough control or repetition of vocabulary. The reading level of tradebooks is unknown.
4. Most classes are too large for individualized reading to be used effectively.
5. There are not enough books in most schools to make the program work.
6. Individualized reading will not work with slow learners and in primary grades, especially the first

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<sup>1</sup>Harry W. Sartain, "The Roseville Experiment with Individualized Reading," The Reading Teacher, 13:279, April, 1960.

grade. All slow pupils and those who cannot work well independently become restless and tend to waste time.<sup>1</sup>

The 1962 Harvard Report on Reading in Elementary Schools showed that of the 407 teachers and principals contacted, only 24 expressed a clear preference for the individualized reading approach.<sup>2</sup> Those favoring adoption of the plan did so because they believed children were motivated to read more books and that achievement and interest was higher than it had been under other programs.

Austin and Morrison found that school administrators offered this reason for not favoring adoption of the program; too few teachers possessed the ability and/or knowledge necessary to conduct this approach with success.<sup>3</sup>

#### COMBINING BASAL AND INDIVIDUALIZED READING

Throughout the development of education, various patterns of instructional practices have been tried and defended while others were rejected. Eventually, the best of each approach was modified or combined into an instructional pattern more effective than any specific one used exclusively.

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<sup>1</sup>Patrick Groff, "Helping Teachers Begin Individualized Reading," National Elementary Principal, 43:50, February, 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Mary C. Austin and Coleman Morrison, The First R, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

The basal reader approach has been effective for many years, and will undoubtedly continue to be successful for many years to come.<sup>1</sup> In order for individualized reading instruction to be effective, all basal reading instruction does not have to be eliminated. Available evidence does not justify the claim that individualized instruction produces greater gains in reading achievement than a basal reading program, nor does it support the contention that a basal reading program is superior to an individualized. Both approaches seem to have distinct advantages. At the present time, research is needed that will give educators some indication of the best features of each approach and how they may be best applied.<sup>2</sup>

While it is recognized that there is no one approach which will completely solve the problems of all or reach all children, the adoption of either group or individualized reading does not insure development of pupil interest and skills necessary for higher levels of achievement.

The goal of the reading teacher is to provide a reading environment which is rich and vital, which fosters growth in reading, and which creates within pupils an

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Barbe, Educators Guide to Personalized Reading Instruction, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>A. Sterl Artley, "An Eclectic Approach to Reading," Elementary English, 38:321, May, 1961.



incentive and eagerness to learn. One factor to be considered when judging the quality of a primary reading program is the extent to which children genuinely enjoy exploring the printed page.

In the light of these statements, the question confronting teachers is not whether one approach is better than the other. The resourceful teacher sees an apparent need to select the positive features of both approaches and incorporates them in an effective reading program.

Statements by reading authorities. Several prominent authorities have concluded that the most desirable procedure is to adapt the best features of individualization and of group instruction to the reading situation.

In The Reading Teacher, Gray cites a distinctive recommendation made by the National Committee on Reading in 1924,

The Committee recommended group basal instruction with wide provision for individual differences and in addition supplementary reading adapted to the varying interests and reading abilities of pupils. Similar proposals were made by the Committee in 1936, 1947, and 1948. In the light of these facts, it seems desirable to consider a combination of whole-class activities, group reading, and individualized reading as more likely to be able to achieve all the varied objectives of reading instruction than can be attained by using just one of the approaches.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William S. Gray, "Role of Group and Individualized Teaching in a Sound Reading Program," The Reading Teacher, 11:100, December, 1957.

It is the opinion of Lazar that teachers should recognize that neither group nor individual practices alone constitute the reading program. She strongly maintains that by using the features of both methods, children will be encouraged to think, make independent choices, and develop favorable attitudes as well as reading skills.<sup>1</sup>

Gates evaluated recent research and the experience of teachers who had used basal reading programs and the better individualized procedures. He concluded that,

The best work with basal books embodies individualized teaching, and the best individualized teaching includes whole class and sub-group activities and the use of materials taken from, or identical in principle with basal readers. We must undertake to discern the good features of each and attempt to embody them into what should be a better system than either.<sup>2</sup>

Authorities agree that the most important feature of individualized instruction is that of teacher-pupil interaction during the individual conference. It would seem that over-all achievement seems to increase as teachers come to better understand their children. Artley believes that improved understandings growing out of a closer teacher-pupil relationship are not the exclusive outcome of

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<sup>1</sup>Jeanette Veatch, Individualizing Your Reading Program, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Gates, "Improvements in Reading Possible in the Near Future," The Reading Teacher, 12:86, December, 1958.



an individualized approach.<sup>1</sup> The individual and small group conference may be just as much a part of a program using basal readers and group procedures as one using trade books and individualized procedures.

A summary of the research to 1959 was prepared by Witty. He concluded,

It seems that a defensible program in reading will combine the best features of both individualized and group instruction in reading. It is necessary for teachers to select 'basal materials' with care and to use them judiciously to meet individual and group needs. Beyond doubt there is need also for more diverse materials in any worthwhile reading program. It is clear today we have an unusual opportunity to cultivate independence in reading through the use of many excellent children's books now available.<sup>2</sup>

The provocative point of view expressed by Sartain was that children who complete the basal reader series would profit from individualized reading for the rest of the year and that children in the fast reading group could effectively use the basal reader part of the day and the individualized reading the rest of the day.<sup>3</sup> He believed that before individualized work was added to the basic program, the teacher must be sure that the basic work was of

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<sup>1</sup>A. Sterl Artley, "An Eclectic Approach to Reading," Elementary English, 38:325, May, 1961.

<sup>2</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, p. 510.

<sup>3</sup>Harry W. Sartain, "The Place of Individualized Reading in a Well-Planned Program," Contributions in Reading, 28:4, April, 1965.



high quality.

In Stauffer's recommendations for a modified reader approach, he emphasized the need to specify the conditions under which both types of programs may operate so that they will complement rather than contradict each other. To do this effectively, he contended that,

1. Educators must drop the notion that a basic reader program in and of itself is final and sacred.
2. The idea must be changed that time can be equated with equality. Not every group must be met every day for the same length of time.
3. Teachers must depart from the idea that a basic book recommended for a grade level must be finished by all pupils in a grade before they can be promoted.
4. Reading must be taught as a thinking process.
5. Effective skills of word attack must be taught.
6. Teachers must provide many books and allow pupils to make their own selection.
7. The reading program should be divided so as to allow about half of the time for each approach.<sup>1</sup>

In his book Reading in the Elementary School, Spache outlined a combined primary program which suggested different programs for gifted, average, and slow learning pupils. He contended that the superior children were capable of rapid, individual progress and did not require the measured pace of the basal program. After introduction to reading

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<sup>1</sup>Russell G. Stauffer, "Individualized and Group Type Directed Reading Instruction," Elementary English, 37:381, October, 1960.

through experience charts, these children would follow the individualized approach.<sup>1</sup>

For average learners, Spache recommended a modified basal reader approach involving introduction to reading through experience charts, followed by use of basal materials, and later, individualization. For the slow learners, it was suggested that the readiness program be extended with extensive use of experience charts. Basal materials would be introduced as soon as the teacher judged that the pupils were ready.

Attempts to combine basal and individualized reading. Several suggestions have been made for modifying conventional textbook practices. Within the past ten years, writers in Elementary English have noted some examples of effective combinations of group and individual approaches.

Sharpe described an ingenious program with second graders in which the teacher worked one or two days each week in the basal readers for systematic instruction in basic reader skills, and used, on the other days, an individualized approach to promote individual interests.<sup>2</sup> In the systematic instruction period, the children worked in

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<sup>1</sup>George D. Spache, Reading in the Elementary School, pp. 185-189.

<sup>2</sup>Maida Wood Sharpe, "Individualized Reading Program," Elementary English, 35:507-512, December, 1958.



groups on word attack, vocabulary building, location and organization skills, comprehension, and critical reading. Grouping of the pupils according to the ability levels, sometimes remained when working with basal readers. Sometimes the class was grouped according to interests or skill needs.

On the individualized days each child read in a book of his own choice at his own interest and reading level. Part of this reading was done under direct teacher supervision and a portion of it was done during an indirectly teacher-supervised period. Some days children read in groups; some days they read independently at their seats while individual pupils conferred with the teacher.

Sharpe observed that the plan did require more time in preparation and planning, but the children read more and enjoyed it thoroughly. She noted that better work habits seemed to be established and an increased achievement level was indicated.<sup>1</sup>

Another approach was suggested by Kirby who described a program in which reading skills were presented to the children. For three days each week the children worked independently and on the other two days, they worked together. During the independent reading period, the teacher

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<sup>1</sup>Maida Wood Sharpe, "An Individualized Reading Program," Elementary English, 35:512, December, 1958.



worked with one child at a time during a ten minute conference one or more times a week.<sup>1</sup>

Dornhoefer conducted a similar program with first graders. She particularly recommended the periods of independent reading. The one disadvantage was lack of time to read with each child every day. This teacher preferred a combination of approaches in attempting to achieve the major goals of reading.<sup>2</sup>

Carson wrote about a similar successful program she experienced with second grade. She did not wish to have a completely individualized program. The basal reading groups were retained as usual and all supplementary reading was individualized.<sup>3</sup>

Darrow and Howes described another way basal textbooks and group instruction had been combined effectively.<sup>4</sup> On certain days, instead of sharing individual reading, they had the children work on skills in small groups. For practicing certain skills, the children also worked from a

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret Kirby, "Tete-a-tete Lessons Develop Independent Readers," Elementary English, 34:302-3, May, 1957.

<sup>2</sup>Ruth Rowe and Esther Dornhoefer, "Individualized Reading," Childhood Education, 34:118-22, November, 1957.

<sup>3</sup>Louise G. Carson, "Moving Toward Individualization--A Second Grade Program," Elementary English, 34:362-66, October, 1957.

<sup>4</sup>Helen F. Darrow and Virgil M. Howes, Approaches to Individualized Reading, p. 16.

common reader; for others, they used workbooks, trade books, supplementary books and other aids. Many different skills were practiced in this manner.

Evaluation of a combined program. In the light of recent reports, it is evident that some teachers have made efforts to depart from established practices and to test new approaches. Available evidence supported the contention that a combined program has distinct advantages. Several writers criticized the "either individualized reading or basal reading" approach. Sharpe, Carson, Kirby, Dornhoefer, Darrow, and Howes maintained that the combined basal-group and individualized approach seemed to challenge the most able pupils by providing many varied reading opportunities. At the same time, the combined program furnished them with a systematic approach to sequential skill instruction which is needed by all pupils.

Some teachers reported that primary children showed an increased desire to read. They reported that many primary classes read thirty to seventy books per child during the school term.

Unfortunately, there is no panacea for all the difficulties teachers encounter when teaching pupils to read. The teacher who is concerned only with the development of reading skills will not achieve the objective of a good reading program, nor will the teacher who is concerned only



with developing desirable attitudes toward reading. For that reason, a good reading program should consist of both individualized and basal instruction.

In reviewing the reports of combined programs, it was assumed that the procedure for dividing instructional time between basal and independent reading would depend upon the wishes of the teacher and the needs of the pupil. A few possibilities for a combined program are summarized:

1. As Supplementary Reading. Before and after the child has met with his basal group and completed his basal workbook activities, all independent work time is used for self-selection of reading.
2. As an Afternoon Program. The children are grouped for basal work in the morning and have individualized reading with conferences during the afternoon reading time.
3. As a Periodic Reinforcer. After being introduced to certain new skills during a few weeks of basic work, the children in a reading group put aside basal books for a short time while they practiced skills through individualized reading.
4. As a Post-Basal Program. A group of children finishes the basal program during the first part of the year and then engages in individualized reading for the remaining weeks.
5. As Part of a Language Arts Unit. The children plan a language activity, such as a puppet show, based on the theme of their basal reader unit. The project encourages extensive individual reading of related stories as well as listening, speaking, and creative writing experiences.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Harry W. Sartain, "Individual or Basal in Second and Third Grades," Instructor, 74:69, 96, 100, March, 1965.



## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the purpose of this study to: (1) state present day objectives and practices of reading; (2) report current views on a combined basal and individualized programs; (3) review literature pertaining to attempts to implement a combined program in primary grades; and (4) evaluate the combined program.

## Summary

For this study, the literature traced the development of reading instruction in America. The pattern of development was one of constant change and progress. From time to time, objectives, materials, and teaching practices underwent vast changes. The literature illustrated that, during some periods of time, the methods and goals remained much the same; then quite suddenly, a new emphasis evolved. As political, economic, and religious patterns of the new country changed, reading instruction also went through periods of change.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the major goal of reading instruction has been to provide a rich and vital program that would serve to promote interest and enjoyment for reading. Continuous effort was made to improve reading instructional methods and practices that would expand to equip pupils with the means to progress

socially and academically, and to provide experiences to enrich the personality.

The emphasis went from individual instruction as practiced in the "Dame Schools" to "group instruction," as the concept of mass education swept the country; and back to a concept of providing for individual differences through individualization of reading instruction.

Numerous reports confirm the fact that the basal reading program is most commonly used and will continue to be indispensable for most teachers and for most children if essential skills are to be developed. It was found that most educators believe that the basal reading approach has an advantage of setting forth a well-planned reading program for primary as well as all grades throughout the elementary school. Reading teachers contended that if not misused, the highly organized and controlled basal materials were effective in providing a common background from which teachers may build and develop the desired skills and attitudes.

Most writers recognized dangers in relying on a single basal reader for the whole class. The trend was to supply several basal series using a different series for each group. Fresh material for every group improved the children's reading interests, made basic reading a real thought-getting process, and reduced the stigma associated



with grouping.

Some authorities were concerned and dissatisfied that the traditional basal system did not seem to provide efficiently for individual needs. Some feared that the highly regimented, carefully controlled and graded basal materials had been over-emphasized at a sacrifice of interest for reading and consideration for the personal needs of each child.

As a result of extensive research and growing knowledge about child development and the learning theory, emphasis was centered on "individualized instruction". A number of attempts were made to stimulate individual progression and to adjust instruction to the needs of all children. It was not until 1950, that a few teachers in the country departed from traditional practices and attempted to test new approaches. They experimented with new ideas and altered school environments to permit children to explore materials and read independently at their own pace. There was more self-initiated reading and more extensive use of children's literature to develop worthwhile habits of and enduring interests in good reading.

This study was particularly concerned with the review of literature which showed possibilities for a combined basal and individualized reading program.

Some authorities as well as classroom teachers saw

merit in a combined basal and individualized program. Some reports by teachers who had tested the new approach were highly encouraging. The teachers proposed a program which selected the best features of each method and adapted them to the needs and interests of their particular classes. Although each of the plans differed somewhat, the primary similarity was in their purpose. The aim was to select with care the best principles in each approach and attempt to embody them into what would be a better system.

### Conclusion

It is concluded that some widely-followed basal programs are inflexible. A review of literature contends that the individualized program is more flexible. It is evident that new designs, materials, and methods are needed before questions can be answered by reading experts.

There is a need for more studies and trials before concrete and definitive statements can be made concerning either instructional approach, or a definite statement made regarding a combined approach. In the meantime, it is concluded that it would be desirable for teachers to follow a flexible program using the best texts available and combining group with individualized reading.

In view of the literature reviewed, it is concluded that there is no reason to forfeit the advantages of a well



planned basal system. Instead, the teacher may obtain the benefits of individual conferences and independent selection of reading materials by adding them to the basal reading plan. By implementing these approaches, new insights may be forthcoming. Through cooperative effort of classroom endeavor, together with research, new techniques may develop.

### Recommendations

As a result of this study, the author recommends that:

1. The teacher of first, second, or third grade pupils who decides to give serious consideration to use of a combined reading program, should do so through appropriate planning procedures;
2. The teacher be experienced in the teaching of all aspects of reading methodology and have a thorough knowledge of children and children's literature;
3. That a combined program be initiated in the first grade after the pupils have completed a reading readiness period, learned an adequate number of sight words to begin a pre-primer, or when the teacher judges they are ready. The second and third grades may begin a combined basal and individualized program at the beginning of the term or when the teacher and pupils decide it is best.

The literature suggested several plans for adding individualized work to basal programs. Regardless of the organization selected for use, it is recommended that during the day when pupils are not engaged in basic study, opportunity be made for them to enjoy extensive independent reading from basal readers, supplementary readers, and trade books.

Another recommendation is that arrangement be made for children to share self-selected reading with the teacher during short individual conferences. The conference would be used to assist the child with individual problems and for recording the special learning difficulties of the pupil. Group sharing activities of at least fifteen minutes would be scheduled several times a week.

Acknowledging that it is essential that the teacher provide opportunity for sharing independent reading experiences, it is further recommended that children learn to record their readings as well. The form of the records may be changed frequently in order to motivate and stimulate pupils for continued reading.



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COMBINING BASAL AND INDIVIDUALIZED READING IN A  
WORKABLE PROGRAM FOR PRIMARY GRADES

by

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B. S., Kansas State University, 1965

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

The purpose of this study was to acquaint the writer with some of the procedures and attempts made by classroom teachers to combine basal and individualized reading in primary grades and to consider and evaluate those most practical features of the two programs. The procedure was to study and compare the findings of the research in an attempt to determine whether the most appropriate features of individualized reading could be practically and appropriately formulated into an enriched approach to reading instruction.

Information for the report was gathered from current educational literature. A review of literature was made in the field of reading regarding the specific areas of: (1) the development of present day reading objectives and methods; (2) distinctions of basal reading instruction; (3) distinctions of individualized reading; (4) attempts to combine features of basal and individualized instruction in the primary classroom; and (5) evaluation of a combined approach.

The review of the literature revealed that writers were in favor of an approach which: (1) made provision for meeting the needs of all pupils; (2) provided for a continuation of a systematic and organized instruction of skills as contained in basal instruction; (3) emphasized a self-selection and independent reading period with teacher



guidance; (4) opportunity for teacher-pupil relationship through individual conference; and (5) motivated pupil improvement and fostering enjoyment for and interest in reading.

As a result of the study, it was recommended that a teacher of first, second, or third grades could initiate a successful combined program when following appropriate planning procedures. The various arrangements suggested would provide an environment in which children had access to a variety of challenging books and would be permitted to select their own reading during independent reading periods. It was suggested that individual conferences with the teacher be arranged for as often as possible. Skills would be taught systematically through the basic program giving children opportunity for interaction and reaction with the group so as to express ideas, feelings, and to challenge and be challenged by the contribution of others.